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UN Secretary-General reaffirms support to co-operatives movement in his meeting with ICA President

 ICA United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan underlined his President continued support to the co-operative movement during his meets UNmeeting with the ICA President, Ivano Barberini on 23 April 2002 Secretary-at the UN headquarters in New York. "Co-operatives have been General able to help millions of people of around the world improve their ICA lives. They are an effective organising mechanism," said Mr. President Annan.

President meets UN Secretary-General

The President and Deputy Director-General, Maria Elena Chavez also met other high-level UN officials including Mr. Johan Schölvinck, Director of the Division for Social Policy and Development of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the UN Focal Point for Co-operatives, Mr. Albert Vinokourov. [... more ...](#)

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"One Voice": ICA's position on the new ILO Recommendation

The ICA Board approved the position of ICA vis-à-vis the draft ILO Recommendation concerning the promotion of co-operatives. This position paper represents a consensus document from which ICA's "one voice" will be heard at the upcoming ILO Conference in June 2002. It will be the basis for all ICA lobbying with the ILO and discussions with representatives of government, workers' and employers organisations. (see [ICA Position Paper](#))

The position paper was prepared by the ICA working group on the ILO Recommendation whose creation was mandated by the ICA General Assembly in Seoul. The working group included members of the ICA respecting regional and sectoral balance and included experts on co-operative legislation. Meeting in Geneva, the working group reviewed the draft recommendation and proposed textual changes for the Board's consideration. A major input to their work came from the Americas where a consensus document including comments and proposed amendments to the draft ILO recommendation on co-operatives was adopted on 18-19 March in San José, Costa Rica. Over 50 Latin American co-operative representatives and an additional 127 participants from the Costa Rican movement participated in the discussions.

It is foreseen that the ICA President address the ILO Conference and the Committee on the Promotion of Co-operatives where the draft Recommendation will be discussed. ICA is also planning a briefing for delegates to the ILO Conference.

[Maria Elena Chavez](#)

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15, route des Morillons, 1218 Grand-Saconnex, Geneva, Switzerland

Tel: (+41) 22 929 88 88 Fax: (+41) 22 798 41 22

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New Director-General to be selected in June 2002

The ICA Board has begun its selection of a new Director-General. A Selection Committee of the Board made up of the President, the four Vice-Presidents and the members of the ICA Board Task Force have reviewed the qualifications of a number of candidates. The Selection Committee will meet and interview the candidates and hope to be able to propose a single candidate to the Board in mid-June 2002 for appointment.

Members of the Selection Committee include Ivano Barberini, Ousseynou Dieng, Miguel Carodozo, Mu Li, Lars Hillbom, Pauline Green, Yehudah Paz and Glen Tully.

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ICA Task Force presents its interim report to Board

The Task Force established by the ICA General Assembly to restructure, reform and improve the efficiency of the ICA presented an interim report to the ICA Board at its meeting in Columbus, Ohio (USA). Meeting on 30 November 2001, 28-29 January and 13 March 2002, members of the Task Force focused attention on the ICA as a global organisation, the regionalisation process, the role of the specialised bodies, and ICA's operational efficiency. Four discussion papers were prepared to solicit input and seek guidance from the Board. Members of the ICA Board dedicated a half-day during their meeting in Columbus. Based on the discussions and future meetings of the Task Force, a short report will be shared with the ICA regions so that the preliminary proposals can be discussed at each regional assembly. In addition, the interim report on specialised bodies will be discussed at the upcoming annual meeting of the ICA president and chairs and secretaries of ICA's specialised bodies on 24 May in Geneva.

The Task Force will continue its work expects to present its conclusions and recommendations to the ICA Board for discussion and decision at the ICA General Assembly in Oslo, 2003.

The Task Force was mandated by the ICA General Assembly "to restructure, reform and improve the efficiency of the work of the ICA in its entirety, to review its financial, organisational and subscription frameworks and relationships between the central and regional offices". (*see: [ICA General Assembly resolution](#)*). Its members include: Ivano Barberini, Ousseynou Dieng, Pauline Green, Yehudah Paz, Glen Tully.

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Over 1000 .coop web sites active around the world!

ICA members have started activating their .coop web site and e-mail addresses joining the more than 1000 active .coop web sites throughout the world. The web sites of a number of ICA members from the Americas, Asia and Europe can be accessed with their new .coop addresses with many retaining their existing web addresses ([see list](#)). ICA too has activated its main site [ica.coop](#) and the regional offices are soon to introduce their web sites using .coop.

New .coop web sites will be introduced daily with over 7,500 .coop domains already sold. Registrations continue to increase especially with the active participation of co-operative organisations that are assisting .coop to verify and facilitate new .coop registrations. Today, 17 organisations from 13 countries are .Coop Verification Partners responsible for confirming the eligibility of .coop registrants from their countries. The majority of Verification Partners are ICA members among which are found the Conseil Canadian de la Coopération; Canadian Co-operative Association; Groupement National de la Coopération (France), Legacoop (Italy), Confecooperative (Italy), Japanese Consumers' Co-operative Union, Confederación Uruguaya de Entidades Cooperativas (Uruguay), Lithuanian Consumer Cooperative Union, Co-operative Association of the Czech Republic, Pellervo Confederation of Finnish Co-operatives, Central Union of Consumer Societies of Ukraine; National Co-operative Organisation of Malaysia; and Consejo Nacional de Cooperativas (Costa Rica).

For information on becoming a Verification Partner, contact support@communicate.coop.

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Americas & Europe: Regional Assembly preparations move forward

- **Paraguay co-op movement to host Americas Regional Assembly**

The ICA Regional Assembly for the Americas will elect a new ICA Vice-President for the Americas in Asunción, Paraguay during the week of 30 September to 5 October 2002. Mr. Miguel Cardozo who has held the office since 1997 officially informed the ICA Board in Columbus that he will not stand for a new term.

A number of meetings will also be held around the Assembly, the plenary session of the Co-operative Women's Committee of the Americas (CRAMC) and a special session on the the new internet domain name .coop.

Further information on the meeting is available from the [ICA Regional Office for the Americas](#)

- **"Co-operatives in a Dynamic Enterprise Europe"**

"Co-operatives in a Dynamic Enterprise Europe" will be theme of the next ICA European Regional Assembly to be held on 10-11 October 2002 in Lisbon, Portugal. The ICA European Council meeting in Prague on 22 March decided to focus the attention of members on the policy discussions being held within the European Union on co-operatives. Among the highlights of the meeting will also be the election of the new European Council including the the ICA Vice-president for Europe. Mr. Lars Hillbom who has first elected in 1995 as the European Vice-president will not seek re-election.

Registration information for the European Regional Assembly has already been sent to members in the region and is available on the ICA Europe website www.ica.coop/europe.

Meetings of a number of specialised bodies will precede the Assembly including those of Consumer Co-operative International (CCI), ICA Housing and the ICA Gender Equality Committee. The ICA Board will also meet following the close of the Assembly.

For more information, contact [ICA Europe](#)

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Major development challenges face Africa in the 21st Century

What is the image and reality in Africa? The report of the Regional Bilingual Seminar held during the 4th ICA Regional Assembly for Africa on "The Role of Co-operatives in addressing the major development challenges facing Africa in the 21st century" provides an excellent picture of the real Africa based on case studies of co-operatives in several countries on African continent.

Too often the images of Africa that most people are familiar with are based on stereotyped and often negative and pre-conceived ideas propagated by those who are most vocal and have the resources to act (the media, politicians, researchers, experts, international organisations and NGOs). These images typically portray the plight of Africa: natural or human plagues, civil wars, famine, AIDS, natural wealth, macro economic performance, external aid, debt and corruption.

But there is another reality of Africa; an Africa composed of young people, women and men from rural and urban areas who are voiceless, but who very often seek and find their own means of empowerment. This other Africa is organised in co-operatives, self-help groupings and development associations which represent the unfamiliar, hidden face of an Africa fighting silently, but with determination, to improve the lot of its people. It is this struggling Africa, which draws its energy from the grassroots and from its own resources, that ICA and its partners decided to highlight as a symbol in this seminar.

The report of the seminar in addition to the case studies includes analysis of the deliberations at the seminar as well as participants' conclusions and recommendations. The publication is in French, but contains some presentations in English. An English version will soon be available.

[A.S. Kibora](#)

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15, route des Morillons, 1218 Grand-Saconnex, Geneva, Switzerland
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E-mail: ica@coop.org



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ICA's trade facilitation directory on .coop

The Co-op Directory, which was launched in the second half of 2001, can now be accessed at [directories.coop](#) in addition to its existing address [coopdirectories.com](#). This online directory for co-operatives worldwide was developed as a result of an international co-operative trade seminar held in Beijing, China in March 2001, organised by the ICA Regional Office for Asia & the Pacific. The facility was seen as a way of consolidating further the presence of co-operatives on the Internet by providing them a common platform. The Co-op Directory is meant particularly for co-operatives engaged in trade, as buyers and sellers, and aims at promoting contacts and business relationships among these co-operatives around the world. Co-operatives can list their names and basic information in the online directory at no cost. They can also post offer to buy or see products and services.

[Romy Villamin](#)

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ICA ROAP strengthened through secondments

The Japanese Consumers Co-operative Union (JCCU) and National Co-operative Union of India (NCUI) have provided staff to the ICA Regional Office for Asia & the Pacific to better serve members in the region.

JCCU seconded, Mr. Shigehisa (Juku) Ozawa, Director of Special Programmes who focused on gender, youth and consumer activities completed his three-years secondment at the end of March 2002. He has been replaced by Mr. Jiro Ito who will operate from the Singapore Business Facilitation Office.

ICA ROAP also welcomes Ms. Savitri Singh as their Gender Programme Advisor. She will assist Mr. Ito in gender related activities. Ms. Singh has been seconded by NCUI.

ICA would like to thank JCCU and NCUI for their continued support.

[Shil-kwan Lee](#)

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Globalisation & increased competition: Sri Lankan consumer co-ops fight back

In an effort to adapt to changing market conditions, the Sri Lanka Consumer Co-operative Societies Federation will modernise its consumer co-operative stores and establish supermarkets. Today, most of the co-op stores in Sri Lanka are small (measuring 20 square metres) that sell a variety of snacks and drinks.

The introduction of direct operation supermarket stores by the Federation is the only way that it will survive in a changing market which is characterised by an increasing flow of foreign products to Sri Lanka, economic growth, and the change of retail business. It is for this reason that the Negambo Co-op Store is being remodelled into a supermarket that will make it the largest co-operative store in Sri Lanka. The Federation also plans to set up branch stores to engage in direct operations while preparing for the challenges that this will bring in terms of store operations, merchandise procurement and staff adoption.

Consumer co-operative leaders of Sri Lanka know that if they can not compete effectively, they will not survive. They must improve the market share of consumer co-operative stores and are seeking to learn from successful co-operatives in the region. The Federation will send a delegation of ten senior store managers to Japan to visit co-operative stores and supermarkets to study strategies and techniques of retail co-operative business in Japan.

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New co-ops? The first US orchestra co-op

Co-operatives are increasingly moving into new areas of activity such as health and social care, leisure activities and music. The first orchestra co-operative in the United States shows the flexibility of the co-operative business model while underlining that the co-ops serve not only their members, but their communities too.

The Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra was founded in 1992 as a co-operative by a group of musicians to respond to their need to ensure their livelihoods and their wish to continue providing their community with cultural events. Local business provide the 69 member orchestra support not only in recognition of their community action but also because of their entrepreneurship including fiscal probity and strict budgetary constraints that have become the symphony's trademarks. The orchestra has a budget of USD 3.95 million, 1,200 subscribers and more than 500 active volunteers. It plays a 36-week season while accompanying local opera and ballet companies, performing regularly for school children and traveling throughout the state of Louisiana.

The co-operative made the headlines due to its unprecedented move to cut salaries rather than cut jobs and/or the musical programmes they offer.

See full article as it appeared in the [New York Times](#)

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E-mail: ica@coop.org

